

THE BIRDS OF KENYA AND UGANDA.

PART V.

by

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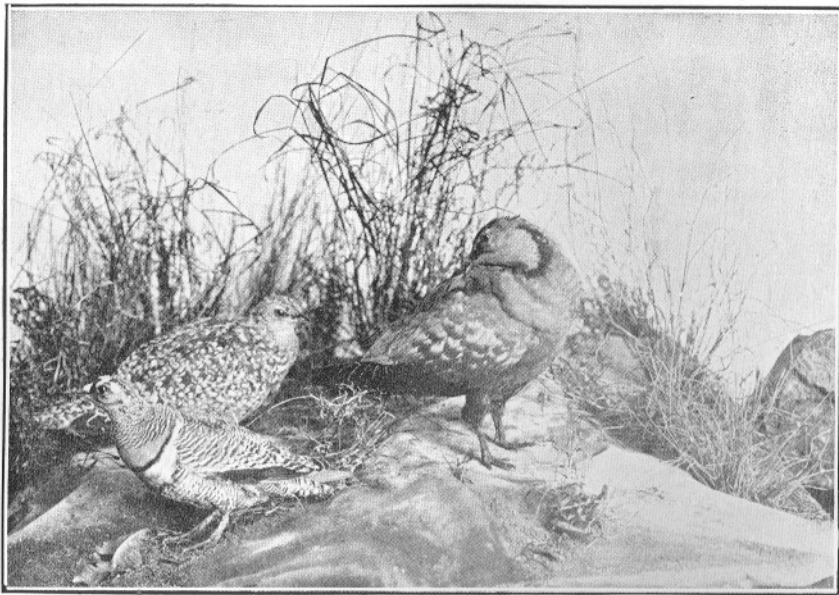
INTRODUCTION.

The birds dealt with in the following notes belong to the small group of "game birds" known as Sandgrouse. They possess certain characteristics which give them superficial resemblance to Pigeons or Doves, others which suggest a similarity to Plovers and in their feathered legs they resemble the common Grouse. They however form a compact family known as the *Pteroclididae*, represented in Kenya and Uganda by examples of two genera, *Pterocles* and *Eremialector*.

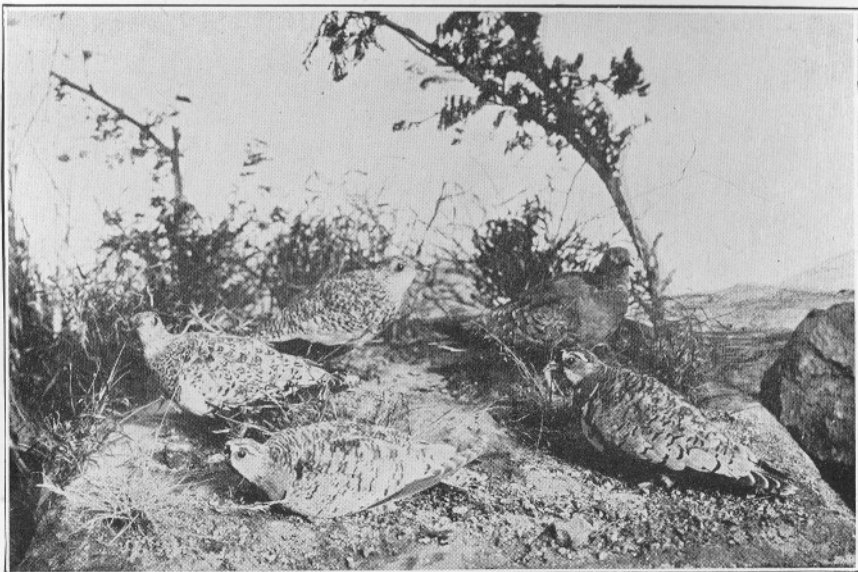
There are certain characteristics which are common to all the species. They are all found in areas which are more or less dry, sandy and stony and where vegetation is sparse or typical of the "bush-veldt." The nesting habits of all are similar, the eggs being laid on the bare ground, usually in a slight depression, and all conform to a general type, being of a curious long oval form or cylindrical, with both ends of similar contour, curiously marbled with superficial and deep markings, and somewhat glossy. The sexes in all species are dissimilar, but all have the front of the legs feathered to the toes. The general type of plumage can be said to be highly cryptic. A marked and peculiar character of these birds is their strict adherence to definite times for drinking; certain species drink only at fixed hours in the morning, others drink only at sunset and dusk. A point relative to this habit has given rise to much controversy: How do the young chicks obtain water seeing that the parents flight such long distances to some favourite watering place? Do the parents carry water in their crops and regurgitate it, or do they carry it in their feathers? Such questions are of exceeding interest yet difficult to answer.

The appended notes are based on our personal experience of the several species found in the territories dealt with, and must not be taken as complete. We would welcome any additional note on habits, etc., and information on the early plumages would be especially useful.

We are especially desirous of obtaining specimens of Sandgrouse for the Museum collection of Game Birds, and sportsmen and others in a position to obtain material are asked to contribute what they can.

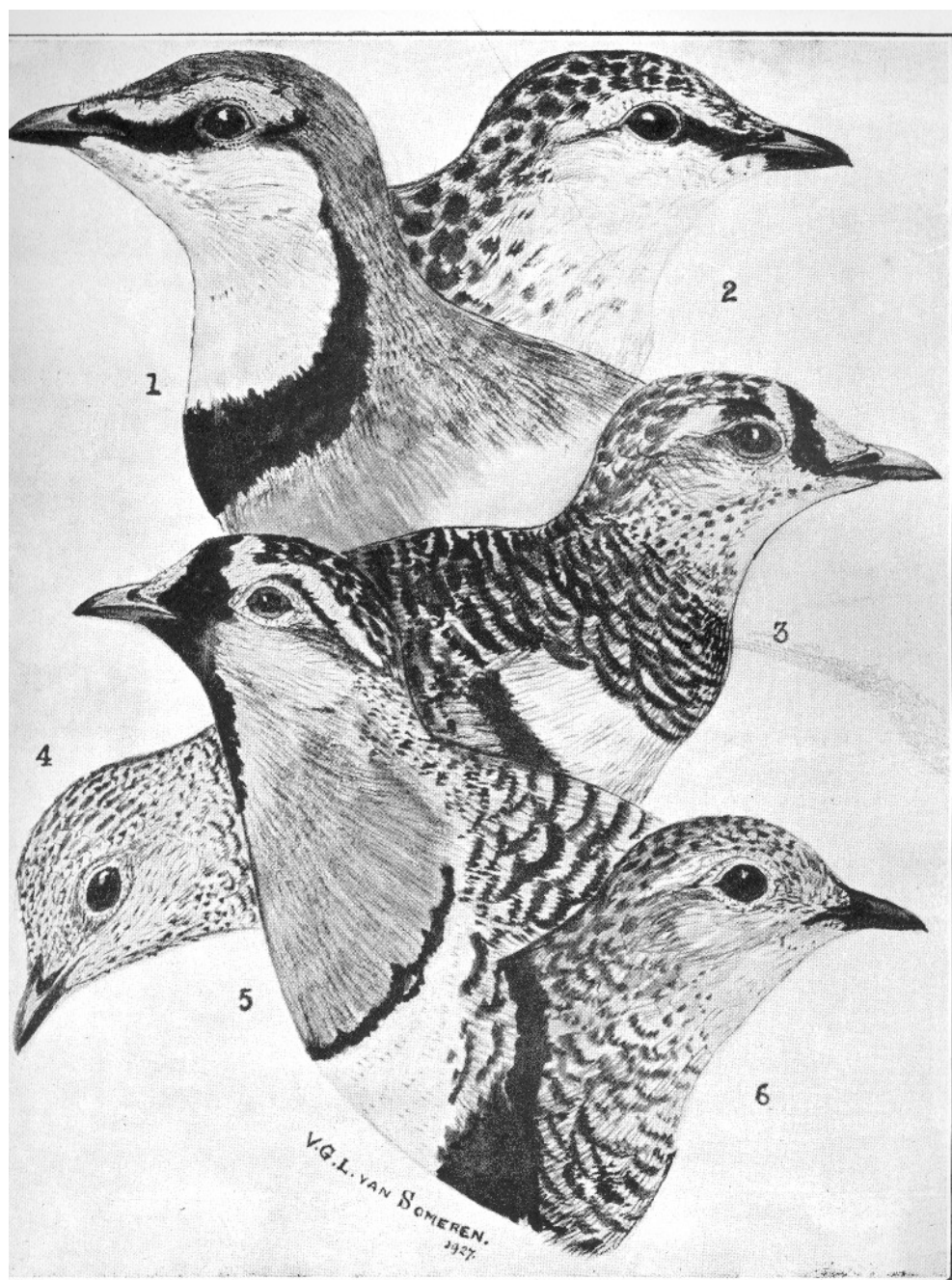


Figs. 1 & 2. *Eremialector gutturalis saturator*.
 Fig. 3. *Eremialector lichtensteinii hyperythrus*.

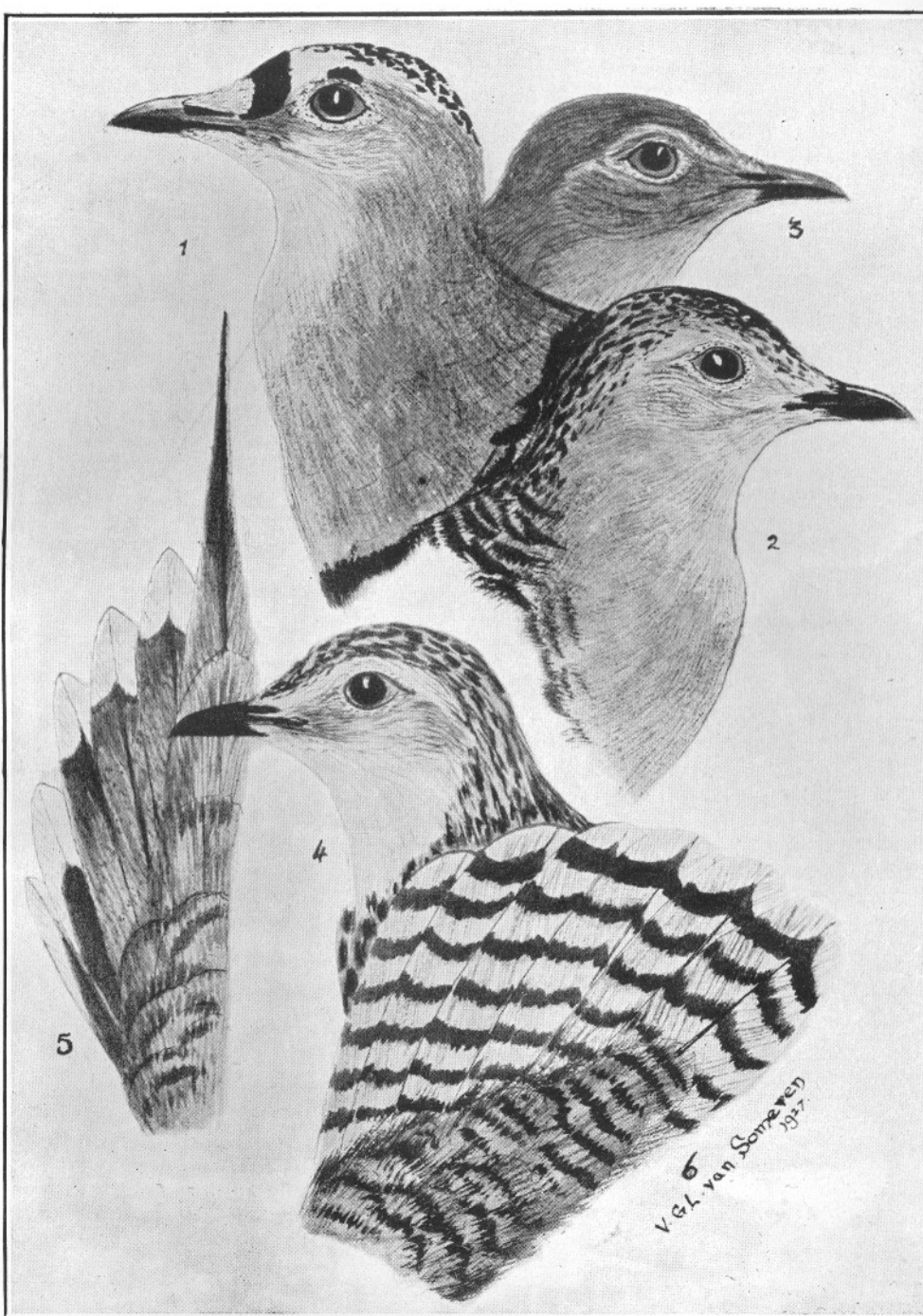


Figs. 1 & 2. *Pterocles senegalensis olivascens*.
 Figs. 3 & 4. *Eremialector decoratus ellenbecki*.
 Fig. 5. *Eremialector decoratus decoratus*.

Photographs of groups in the Nairobi Museum.



Figs. 1 & 2. *Eremialector gutturalis saturation*, male and female.
 Figs. 3 & 4. *Eremialector lichtensteinii hyperythrus*, male and female.
 Figs. 5 & 6. *Eremialector decoratus decoratus*, male and female.



Figs. 1 & 2. *Eremialector quadricinctus lowei*, male and female
 Figs. 3 & 4. *Pterocles senegalensis olivascens*, male and female.
 Fig. 5. Tail of *Pterocles senegalensis olivascens*, male.
 Fig. 6. Tail of *Eremialector q. lowei*, male.

FAMILY PTERCOCLIDIDÆ. Sandgrouse.

GENUS **PTEROCLES**, Temm.

Pterocles senegalensis olivascens, Hartert. Masai Pin-tailed Sandgrouse.

Ref. Hartert, Orn. Monatsb. xvii., p. 183, 1909.

Type locality, Simba, Kenya.

Distribution: The plains and scrub country of Teita, Southern Masai and Ukambani, to South of Kenya.

DESCRIPTION: **MALE.**

Side of head, supercilium and throat ochreous buff, slightly paler on the chin; hind neck and upper breast sandy-ochreous with an olivaceous tinge, shading to rufescent ochreous on the lower breast, this colour merging gradually into the rich chestnut of the belly and flanks. A narrow black band edged with white above separates the upper and lower breast. The centre of the belly is washed with blackish-brown. Crown and mantle ochreous with an olive tinge; lower mantle, inner wing-coverts, and inner secondaries olive-ochreous shading to golden buff at the ends of each feather, most of which are further tipped with chestnut. Rump and upper tail-coverts olive-ochre with a brownish tinge. Tail feathers dark-brown on the inner web, tinged with olive on the outer; all with the exception of the central pair broadly tipped with buff. This buff tip is accentuated by a dark blackish band proximally. Central pair of rectrices abruptly attenuated and extended well beyond the second pair for about an inch and a half; under tail-coverts and feathering on the tarsi sandy buff. Greater and lesser wing-coverts golden-buff, the latter with chestnut tips.

Primaries and primary coverts dark blackish-brown, the six innermost primaries with whitish ends to the inner webs, extending slightly to the outer web. Secondaries blackish-brown, the outer ones with slight white tips, the innermost with broad sandy border on outer web.

Bill. bluish white at tip, darker at base of lower mandible. Eyes brown; bare skin round eye yellowish olive. Feet olive grey.

FEMALE:

Entire head, neck and breast pale sandy-buff, the feathers of the crown, neck and upper breast with dark brown central streaks; the streaked area of the breast separated from the lower uniform buff zone by a row of feathers with brownish bars. Belly, flanks, and thighs brownish-black with narrow cross-bars of rufous-buff. Under tail-coverts and feathering on tarsi pale buff to white.

Mantle, inner coverts, rump and upper tail-coverts rufous sandy-buff with narrow blackish-brown barring. Lesser and secondary coverts sandy-buff with blackish bars and chestnut tips; greater coverts uniform buff. Primaries and primary coverts brownish black, the inner five primaries with white on the tips especially on the inner webs. Secondaries brownish-black, the outer ones with narrow white edges at the tips, the inner ones with brown on the edge of the outer webs. Rectrices blackish-brown with rufous-buff barring and buff tips. The outline of the tail is an abrupt wedge, tapering towards the central pair which extend beyond the rest.

Colour of eyes, feet, and soft parts as in the male.

JUVENILE:

The first feathered plumage is unknown to me, but that of a young male in second feather is very like the adult female, having much the same general appearance but differs in being more rufescent on the mantle, more barred on the breast, and a lighter brown on the belly.

HABITS:

The Masai Pin-tailed Sandgrouse is found in the dry, stony country of the Massai and Wakamba, where the thorn bush is sparse and low. Like the majority of this group, they are mostly in evidence when coming to or at water, for their morning drink. At a favourite watering place they may be encountered in hundreds, but at other times when dispersed in the surrounding country, one may see a small flock of half a dozen birds or perhaps a single pair. Their colour harmonises so well with the general aspect of the ground that it is very difficult to "spot" a sitting bird unless it moves.

I have encountered a sitting bird on more than one occasion, yet, though within a yard or so have not detected it until it started to leave its nest. If the eggs are fresh the parent leaves long before one is near the spot, but if on the point of hatching she sits close.

Two to three eggs form the clutch; they are wonderfully coloured, the ground colour varying from pale ochreous to cream or greyish with streaks or blotches of bluish-grey and mauve underlying the surface and varying shades of brown and olive-tawny spots, blotches and streaks on the surface. In shape they are a long oval and measure 36.5 to 37 x 25 mm. We have records of nests found in the months of June, July, and December.

As a sporting bird the "Pin-tail" offers good shooting, as they are very fast on the wing, but to a good shot they are not difficult, as the flight is direct.

From personal observation it would appear that this species is resident in its distribution throughout the year.

Pterocles senegalensis somalicus, Hartert. Somali Pin-tailed Sandgrouse.

Ref. Hartert, Nov. Zool. vii., p. 28, 1900.

Type locality, Milmil, Somaliland.

DISTRIBUTION:

The northern portion of Jubaland, and the thorn-bush country north of Mt. Kenia, westward to Baringo and Lake Rudolf, and Turkhana.

DESCRIPTION:

Male and female. Very like the preceding race but paler throughout. In the male the head, neck, and upper mantle are much brighter isabelline golden, without the olive tinge; the coverts are all much more broadly tipped with golden buff.

HABITS:

As with the preceding race. Typical examples of the Somali race are found in the northern districts of Jubaland and towards the southern Abyssinian border, but when we come to the North Kenia birds and those inhabiting the Turkwell and Turkhana areas we find a certain number tend to be intermediate in colouration, and approaching the form *olivascens*; there is no sharply defined boundary between the two forms.

GENUS EREMIALECTOR, ScL.

Eremialector decoratus decoratus, Cab. Southern Bridled Sandgrouse.

Ref. Cabanis, J.F.O., 1868, p. 143.

Type locality, Lake Jipe, Tita.

Distribution: In the drier parts of Kenia, Serengetti, Yatta, and Massai district and south of Mt. Kenia.

DESCRIPTION. MALE ADULT:

Forehead, except for extreme base, lores and centre of the throat, black, outlined with white; the white extending back over the supercilium and bordered below with black. Base of mandible and chin, white. Side of head, neck and ear-coverts, sandy buff, the latter streaked with blackish. Upper breast sandy-buff washed with olive: lower breast white, separated from the upper by a narrow black line. Abdomen and flanks dark blackish-brown, most of the feathers with narrow white tips. Crown and hind-neck sandy-buff streaked with blackish; mantle, rump and upper tail-coverts buff, barred with black; wing-coverts buff with widely spaced irregular broken black bars. Primaries blackish brown, darker on the inner ones; outermost feather with buff or white outer web; five inner ones with white

margined tips. Secondaries blackish-brown with white margins at end; inner ones with rufescent edges and vermiculations on the outer webs. Rectrices buff with whitish ends and irregular black bars; central pair vermiculated with blackish. Under tail-coverts whitish to buff with angular black bars. Feathers of thighs and tarsi whitish. Bill ochre yellow, paler on mandible. Cere yellowish. Feet greenish-yellow.

FEMALE:

Throat, side of head and supercilium sandy-buff, slightly spotted at the gape and streaked on the ear-coverts with blackish. Lower neck, upper half of breast and hind-neck sandy buff with blackish bars. In some specimens the black marks on the mid upper breast are rather circular, enclosing a somewhat cordate area of the ground colour. Rest of the plumage of the underside as in the male, with the white on the abdomen more pronounced. Mantle and scapulars and lesser coverts, rich sandy-buff with wavy irregular black sub-marginal lines following the general contour of the feathers, internal to which are irregular wavy cross bars. Rest of the upperside as in the male but ground colour rather darker, and black markings wider and more pronounced. Bill horn-brown, paler on the lower mandible; cere greenish yellow; feet yellowish olive.

JUVENILE:

The young in first feather are sandy buff below, each feather with an angular subterminal black bar; the belly brownish with buffy tips to each feather. The upper surface is rusty brown heavily barred with black. The wing feathers are variegated chestnut and black. This plumage rapidly gives place to the intermediate one which resembles somewhat that of an adult female, but is altogether brighter and more reddish. The feathers of the crown, hind-neck, and the whole of the upper surface including the wing-coverts are reddish chestnut with pale buff tips and blackish centres; those of the mantle and wings have in addition, two or more wavy black cross bars.

The scapulars and secondaries have buff tips and margins to the outer webs while each black bar is outlined proximally with bright chestnut. The ends of the primaries are chestnut with pale tips and blackish vermiculations. Both male and female, at this stage have sandy-buff breasts tinged with rusty brown towards the tips, each feather with an angular bar. The lower breast is a dirty buffy white; the abdomen is brownish with wide white tips to the feathers.

The young bird moults directly from this plumage into that of the adult male or female; the change being a gradual one.

HABITS:

The Bridled Sandgrouse is undoubtedly the commonest species in Kenya and is more often "put up" during a day's shooting in

scrub country than any other. They are found throughout practically the whole of the thorn bush country from the Kilimanjaro border to north Ukambani, frequenting the open patches of stony ground. Sometimes one comes upon them in quite thick bush where their special food plant happens to be growing. In the ordinary way one flushes them in pairs or possibly in small parties of six or so; it is only when they have congregated at some favourite drinking place that one sees them in numbers, varying from a dozen to sometimes a couple of hundred.

These birds are very conservative and fastidious about their drinking places; the same bunch will visit one particular spot daily until the water is dried up, or one drifts at a river where the water is shallow and easily accessible. They seem to prefer a spot where the ground is clear of bush and the slope to the water is gradual. They certainly prefer clear to muddy water.

These birds have two call notes, one uttered when suddenly flushed while feeding, consisting of a sharp repeated "chuck," the other a high whistling call consisting of three syllables, the first two drawn-out, the last short and abrupt.

The nesting season is rather irregular. Jackson found the birds breeding on the Useri Plains in June and July, Praed found nests in August on the Serengeti, while my records are Tsavo in October and April on the Loita and Taveta.

Practically no attempt is made at constructing a nest, the two or three eggs which form the normal clutch being laid in a mere depression in the earth; little or no material being added as a lining. The eggs are somewhat glossy, and long oval in shape. The ground colour is "putty-coloured" or buff with mauve markings below the surface and liver or red-brown spots and marbling on the surface.

The food consists of bulbous roots, grass seeds and small leguminous seeds, as well as insects. I have occasionally put these birds up from amongst a small patch of ripening m'wele, but they do not usually frequent cultivations.

Eremialector decoratus ellenbecki, Erl. Northern Bridled Sandgrouse.

Ref. Erlanger, J.f.o., 1905, p. 92.

Type locality, Sidimun, South Somaliland.

Distribution: Jubaland and the districts north of the Northern Guasso Nyiro.

DESCRIPTION. ADULTS:

Very similar to *decoratus decoratus* but paler throughout. The difference between this and the southern race is more marked in the

females than the males. The black areas of the feathers are more restricted, while the marginal borders are wider and paler buff; the intervening areas are however more rusty brown.

HABITS:

Similar to the preceding race.

Taken as a whole, the Bridled Sandgrouse can be said to be an inhabitant of the bush veldt rather than the open plain. They are quite sporting little birds and offer good shooting either when walked up in the bush or when fighting to water.

Eremialector gutturalis saturation, Hartert. Eastern Yellow-throated Sandgrouse.

Ref. Hartert, Nov. Zool. vii., p. 29, 1900.

Type locality, Simba, Ukambani.

Distribution: In suitable localities throughout the drier parts of Kenya.

DESCRIPTION. MALE ADULT:

Forehead and crown dull olive shading to golden-olive on the back of the neck; a buff line outlined in black stretches from the base of the bill, above the nostrils to a point above the posterior angle of the eye. Below this line is a black streak which extends from the gape to the anterior angle of the eye. The chin, throat, cheeks, and ear-coverts are buff shaded with yellow. The distal and lower edge of this throat patch is set off by a broad purple black band; chest and breast grey, shaded with golden-olive at the neck band, and with olive-brown distally, the whole shading in gradually into the dark chestnut of the lower breast and abdomen; under tail-coverts and thighs chestnut with black bars. Tarsi rusty brown. Mantle back and upper tail-coverts olive-grey shaded with brownish; scapulars dark ashy-grey shaded at ends with olive-brown; wing coverts grey at the base, broadly tipped with bright rusty brown to light chestnut. Lesser coverts greyish-olive shaded distally with rusty-brown. Primaries and outer secondaries black with very narrow pale margin at ends. Inner secondaries with greyish olive shading on outer webs, tinged with brownish. Rectrices black, with rusty-brown tips and olive shading on outer webs; the three outermost with dentate marks of rusty-brown; central pair olive-greyish.

FEMALE. ADULT:

Chin throat and ear-coverts sandy buff; supercilium of the same colour, separated from the buff of the side of the head by a black line which extends from the nostrils to the anterior angle of the eye. A small blackish spot just above the eye. Crown nape and the rest of the upperside yellowish buff, each feather with a blackish centre,

slightly expanded at the end; the longer feathers with one or more blackish bars. Upper chest similar to the mantle, but black marks finer; breast, abdomen and flanks rusty buff with blackish barring. Under tail-coverts dull chestnut. Primaries as in the male. Eyes brown; feet pale grey; bill slatey-grey.

JUVENILE:

The chick in down is unknown to me.

HABITS:

The Yellow-throated Sandgrouse is the largest species found in Kenya and Uganda and although widely spread is not very common.

As with other species, their numbers can best be gauged when flocking at a watering place; some observers have stated that the birds come to water in hundreds, but personal observation over a number of years leads me to believe that they seldom reach even a hundred birds. At a certain watering place on the Athi Plains, the Yellow-throat is to be seen fighting in, in batches of a dozen to forty birds at a time. The flight is swift and strong, and after circling the water once or twice at a considerable height, they swoop down to within a few yards of the spot and run to the water's edge. Very little time is spent in actually drinking, and as soon as one batch of birds is finished another appears, their advent heralded by the rather harsh "gruck-glock" of the males. The flocks do not appear to keep together after leaving the water; they break up into small bunches and disperse in various directions to their feeding grounds.

These birds come to water between 8 and 10 a.m. During feeding time they frequent waste stony ground where the scrub is stunted and grass is short. They feed largely on grass seeds, small bulbs and seeds of a leguminous plant; they also take insects.

It is not unusual to put these birds up in bunches of four to six or in pairs during the breeding season, but they do not fly far and can usually be walked up once or twice before going off any distance, for they do not run once they have pitched; they much prefer to squat, and allow one to come quite close before taking wing. They are very partial to ground which is burnt off, especially so when the young grass is beginning to sprout. The breeding season is comparatively short, and extends over August and September; though a few birds also breed in January. Practically no attempt is made at constructing a nest, the eggs being laid in a shallow depression in the earth, which is sometimes lined with bits of grass and small pebbles. Two to three eggs form the full clutch; they are pale sandy buff or olive buff, with spots and streaks of red-brown, and mauve blotches underlying the surface. The size is very constant, the average egg measuring 44 x 34 mm.

It is very essential that this species of Sandgrouse should be protected during the breeding season, especially so as one of its favourite nesting grounds is within easy reach of Nairobi; the activities of the so-called sportsman who does not care two raps whether the birds he shoots are nesting or not should be stopped now, before the birds are driven to seek fresh breeding grounds!

Eremialector lichtensteinii hyperythrus, Erl. Somali Barred Sandgrouse.

Ref. Erlanger, J.f.O., 1905, p. 94.

Type locality: Daua River, S. Somaliland.

Distribution: The northern half of the Juba River district and the Northern Frontier area bordering on Southern Abyssinia.

DESCRIPTION. MALE:

A triangular area at the base of the bill, white, surmounted by a broad black band which stretches across the forehead from lore to lore; this in turn followed by a narrow white band in line with the anterior angle of the eyes. Supercilium white, with a patch of black feathers directly above the eye. Rest of crown, nape and cheeks pale buff streaked and spotted with black. Throat uniform sandy buff. Upper breast, mantle back, rump and upper tail-coverts sandy buff with distinct black barring; rest of breast golden ochreous buff with, in the mid line, crossing from side to side, a narrow black or chestnut black band; the lower edge of the buff breast band is bordered by a black band which separates it from the abdomen, which is white or pale buff narrowly barred with crescentic black lines; thighs and under tail-coverts similarly coloured. Wing coverts pale buff with ends of sandy buff, each feather strongly barred with two or more black bars; scapulas and innermost secondaries rich sandy to rufescent buff with wavy black barring. Primaries brownish black with narrow pale margins to tips; two outermost primaries with pale outer webs. Secondaries brownish-black, the inner ones with large pale buff patches on the outer webs which are obliquely lined with black. Rectrices rich ochreous buff with marked black bars which stop half an inch before the ends, so that the tail feathers are widely buff tipped. Feathers on tarsi white. Feet yellow; bill yellow, darker at tip of upper mandible. Cere round eye, yellow with slight greenish tinge on upper eyelid. Eyes brown. Average length of wings 184 mm.

FEMALE. ADULT:

Crown sandy buff streaked with blackish; rest of head including the throat sandy buff spotted with black. Upper breast, mantle,

scapulars, lesser coverts, and innermost secondaries rufescent-buff narrowly barred with fine wavy black lines; marginal coverts almost uniform sandy-buff; rest of wing-coverts pale buff, richer terminally, all narrowly barred with wavy black lines. Primaries and secondaries as in the male. Belly pale buff with black barring; flanks greyish with angular black bars. Soft parts as in the male, but bill more horn yellow.

JUVENILE:

Unknown to me.

HABITS:

The Somali barred Sandgrouse does not differ in habits from the other race inhabiting Kenya. It comes to water in the evening with the regularity of clockwork. We have no record that these birds partake of a morning drink; in fact the one at evening seems to suffice for the entire 24 hours. They were particularly numerous at a drinking pool on the Upper Juba River at Lollesheid and again at Dolo, but during the day very few birds were put up in the surrounding country; they appeared to forage at a great distance from water. I am indebted to my friend Dr. Bevan for obtaining the specimens on which these notes are made.

Eremialector lichtensteinii sukensis, Temm. Suk Barred Sandgrouse.

Ref. Neumann, Orn. Monatsb., 1909, p. 153.

Type locality, Turkwell River, Suk.

Distribution: The low-lying desert country stretching between Lake Rudolf and north of Elgon and Mt. Kenia, including eastern Turkhana. Turkwell, Suk and the Northern Guasso Nyiro to Marsabit and Karoli.

DESCRIPTION. MALE AND FEMALE:

Very like the South Somali race but generally darker above, due to the black barring being wider and the light areas of the wing coverts being less pale. The abdomen is considerably darker. Bare skin round the eye, yellow; feet rich yellow; bill yellowish-horn, darker at tip; eyes brown.

JUVENILE:

The chick in down is unknown. The young in first feather is as follows: Head, neck, breast and mantle greyish buff with fine blackish barring less pronounced on the throat; a slight indication of a chest

band, due to the feathers being less barred; scapulars sandy-buff with black barring; wing coverts and inner secondaries greyish with fine black vermiculations; primaries brownish-black with pale ends finely vermiculated; abdomen greyish with rather ill-defined blackish barring. Feet olive yellow; bill blackish above brownish below.

HABITS:

The Suk barred Sandgrouse inhabits the dry sandy bush country south of Lake Rudolf and although only met with in pairs or small coveys of six or so during the day, yet when they flock, just before, and at dusk for their evening drink at some favoured water hole or pool in an almost dried up watercourse, they may be seen in large flights. They come to the watering spot at the same time each evening and although a couple of dozen birds may arrive together their approach is swift and noiseless. The time spent in actually drinking cannot be more than a few minutes judging by the numbers which come to and leave a small pool in the space of quarter of an hour. At one particular water hole where I observed these birds there was a continuous stream coming to and going from the spot for well over an hour. These birds are unusually silent so much so that their arrival and departure would not attract attention if one were not actually observing the vicinity of the drinking place.

I have not found the eggs of this species, but Jackson states that they were breeding in the Baringo district in May, while my young birds in first feather were probably hatched in April in the Isiolo district.

Eremialector quadricinctus lowei, C. Grant. Eastern Barred-wing Sandgrouse.

Ref. C. Grant, Bull, B.O.C. Cl. xxxv., p. 19, 1914.

Type locality: Renk, White Nile.

Distribution: The northern districts of Uganda east to the Turkwell River.

DESCRIPTION. MALE:

Forehead broadly black, with a small patch of white at base of bill, and bordered above by an incomplete white band; supercilium white with a black spot above the eye; centre of crown rufescent buff, each feather with a black shaft steak; side of head, ear-coverts and throat golden-buff, slightly paler on the last; nape, hind-neck and upper breast rich sandy ochreous, the first two areas washed with alive; lower breast banded with chestnut, followed by a broader white band edged distally with black. Abdomen, flanks, thighs, and tarsi, banded black and white. Rump, upper tail-coverts rectrices and

under tail-coverts rich ochreous golden barred with black. Lesser coverts at bend of wing uniform golden-buff with a broad glossy blue-black sub-terminal bar outlined with white; these bars arranged in such a way as to form a series of oblique parallel lines across the wing. Primaries and outer secondaries brown-black; inner secondaries brown-black on the inner webs and sandy-buff on the outer, with an oblique black bar outlined with white.

Mantle and scapulars rich ochreous buff shaded with chestnut towards the ends, the feathers of the former with transverse black bars, the latter with angular blue-black bars, slightly confluent.

Feet chrome yellow; bill yellow at base, horn-brown at tip; eyes brown; bare skin round eye, dark yellow.

FEMALE:

Crown and nape rich rufescent buff, each feather with black shaft streak or terminal black spot; supercilium and cheek, throat and breast sandy buff, richer on the last area; lower breast buff with black barring; back of neck rufescent buff with black bars; mantle and scapulars rich rufescent-brown, with heavy angular black bars and pale golden-buff margins. Wing coverts golden-buff with one or more narrow black bars. Rump similar to the mantle; upper tail-coverts, rectrices and under tail-coverts rich sandy buff with transverse black barring. Abdomen, thighs and tarsi barred black and white. Soft parts as in the male, except that the bill is horn-brown.

JUVENILE:

We have no young birds, neither does there appear to be any published description.

HABITS:

This species inhabits the dry stony bush-veldt or northern Uganda and the South Rudolf district, thus overlapping somewhat the distribution of *E. l. sukenis*; indeed in its south-east area it actually associates with that species when flocking at some favoured watering place.

It is an unusually silent bird and utters no note even when flushed from its feeding ground. The time of fighting to the watering place is later than any other species I know, the majority seek water long after sundown, when it is impossible to see clearly, far less make observations on behaviour.

My friend, Capt. Stoneham, writing in the Ibis on his experiences with this bird in Uganda, states: "This Sandgrouse is common. By locating the drinking places . . . many could be shot nightly as they fought to drink, but it was difficult shooting, as they rarely

flighted till well after sundown, when it was so dark that they were difficult to see. They were silent birds; never once did I hear one utter a sound when in flight. Their flight too is noiseless, unless alarmed. Whilst waiting for birds at dusk they frequently arrived and alighted quite close to me without a sound. After arriving at the river they would remain for some time if undisturbed, well into the night, 'bathing' in the dry sand of the river-bed. By day they were sometimes flushed from short grass or mtama and simsim fields. . . . Large flocks were never seen, the maximum of birds observed fighting together being less than a dozen."

There are no published records of the nesting time of this species.